

SECTION B

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B1

GSA Probes 3 Complaints Of Chiseling on Paint Jobs

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The General Services Administration has received complaints of "coat stealing" on painting contracts for three Government projects, including its own record center at Suitland and the headquarters of the super-secret Central Intelligence Agency in Langley.

The complaints were brought to GSA by the same

union painters whose charges that painting contractors had failed to meet specifications on the National Bureau of Standards' atomic reactor at Gaithersburg were backed by a special investigation.

Putting less paint on the walls than is called for is known as "coat stealing" in the trade. It saves the contractor money on both materials and labor.

The painters—E. B. Mann

and F. L. (Pete) Ward—said they were told by Lester D. Gray, a GSA regional compliance official, that he would check into the complaints.

A GSA spokesman said the painters' allegations are being investigated. "Our compliance unit got right out on them," the spokesman said.

He pointed out that GSA has still not accepted the Suitland record center and he expressed doubt that the inspec-

tors could have failed to discover "coat stealing."

Mann and Ward said they told Gray that:

- GSA's giant Government record center at Suitland, about the size of seven football fields, received one coat of paint instead of the seven that the specifications called for. This saved the painting contractor 18,000 gallons of paint, Mann and Ward charged.

- One coat instead of two was used on a repainting job last year at CIA's headquarters in Langley. That job was done at night under such secrecy that union stewards were not allowed inside to make sure the painters' contract was not violated.

- More than 1000 offices in the Department of Agriculture received one coat instead of two when they were repainted.

In addition, the two painters repeated the complaints they made to GSA last August that a seven building office-laboratory complex built for the National Bureau of Standards at Gaithersburg got less paint than it was supposed to.

No report has ever been made public concerning a GSA investigation of the charges that were made at the same time as the complaints about the atomic reactor.

In the reactor case, the National Bureau of Standards conducted its own investigation at the request of Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.), chairman of the House subcommittee on Government activities. Rep. Dante Fascell (D-Fla.) asked the subcommittee to investigate the painters' charges.

The National Bureau of Standards investigation showed that the contractors missed specifications by as much as 60 per cent.

The first time they went to the GSA with complaints, the painters brought affidavits from men who worked on the building swearing that the contractors used less than the required amount of paint.

This time, they said they refuse to show the affidavits to GSA in order to protect the painters who signed them. Instead, they offered to submit a letter to GSA saying they had the affidavits.

After showing the first crop of affidavits to GSA officials last August, they said, the painting contractors knew who had signed them the day after the meeting. Some of the painters lost their jobs as a result of the complaints. Mann and Ward said they have been unable to find work since before Christmas.

Government's house-keeping agency, GSA is responsible for most Federal construction projects.